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## Notes and Opinions.

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**One Method of Modernizing New Testament History.**—Professor H. J. Heuser, in the *American Ecclesiastical Review* for August, has an interesting and crisply written paper upon St. Paul's second missionary journey. In it he traces the travels of Paul until he leaves Philippi. The paper does not contain any specially new information, but is interesting from its effort to revivify the story of the apostle by throwing it into modern terminology. Thus Silas is "one of the chief ecclesiastics at Jerusalem, diocesan consultor, and afterwards Apostolic Delegate to Syria, as well as professor of theology to the neophytes." On his journey Silas would be obliged to take along with him some volumes of canon law containing *Acta et Decreta* of the Council at Jerusalem, which he had taken abroad with him for the direction of the clergymen in the northern and western dioceses. The author guardedly says that "some say that the Apostles had admitted Presbyterians to the council, establishing a sort of precedent for the future Parliaments of Religions." Paul was joined at Troas by a certain Dr. Lucas, who was a scholarly man and a good writer and especially fitted to make converts among the "Upper Ten." At Philippi "our party of Christian gentlemen noticed a coterie of ladies" seemingly engaged in devotional exercises. Among them was an importer of Asiatic purple stuffs, a sort of "Parisian or London *modiste*," who lived in a cottage "convenient to the seaside," from which one got a view of the mountain range to the east.

With a certain allowance for the theological sympathies of the writer, as well as for the more or less excusable mistakes, this is all very interesting. Any legitimate method that will make the life of Paul more vivid is to be most heartily commended. One finds, however, his breath taken away upon learning that as St. Paul, Professor Silas, and Doctor Luke were to "take instructions from a mother church to a new suffragan diocese, so they were to bring back a report of their experience and work. This entailed constant taking of notes, a digest of which would be submitted to the apostolic college with its head, the Pope, who, though still active in the episcopal visitations of

the churches founded by himself, had already fixed his principal see at Rome. The report made by St. Luke is embodied in the Acts of the Apostles." One hardly knows whether to take such an article as this seriously, or as a good-natured midrash. Perhaps it is a little of both.

But is it — and we might ask the same of some well-known Protestant books — is it quite legitimate ?

**Clergymen and the Modern Passion for Reality.**—The *British Weekly* for July 14, 1898, publishes an address delivered by Dr. Marcus Dods at the close of the session of the Theological College at Bala, Wales. The subject is "Theology of the Work of the Ministry," but the address really is devoted to a discussion of the relation of clergymen to the questions suggested by the modern passion for reality. This passion for reality itself, Dr. Dods holds, lies below the critical process with which the Bible is being studied. In the midst of his discussion Dr. Dods has the following, passage which is worthy of repetition :

The criticism which distinguishes our time is not universally looked on with favor. But the popular suspicion or jealousy of it arises from a misunderstanding of its nature, its aims, its instruments, its methods. Sometimes it is spoken of as if it were necessarily antagonistic to Christianity. It is identified with certain of its manifestations and results, and straightway condemned. The popular jealousy of criticism arises from a misconception of its instruments and methods. It is looked upon as a fixed body of opinion. But *abusus non tollit usum* — the abuse of an instrument or method does not nullify its legitimate use, or condemn it absolutely. If there are scientific men who find that their scientific conclusions contradict Scripture, either these conclusions are wrong, or, if they are right, our idea of Scripture has been wrong. In either case the cause of truth is advanced. If certain critics have reached conclusions which clash with preconceived opinions, these conclusions, if wrong, can only be rectified by sounder criticism ; if right, they are to be welcomed as leading us into fuller knowledge. In no case, certainly, is criticism to be condemned. For criticism is not a hostile force hovering round the march of the Christian church, picking off all loosely attached followers, and galling the main body ; it is simply the convenient designation of the most approved methods of ascertaining historical truth. It is a process of which every inquirer more or less consciously avails himself. Everyone has his own tests which he applies to what he hears or reads, and by these tests he determines whether or not belief is warranted. If a sailor tells us he found oranges growing among the ice-hummocks of the Arctic circle, we refuse to believe him, because his information is tested and condemned by the knowledge we already possess. If a document professing to belong to the eighteenth century speaks freely of railways, telegraphs, and electric light, we know it is spurious. Every man is more or less a critic, and criticism as a science collects and applies all the criteria which experience has approved for the determination of the dates of documents, of their

character and credibility, and for discriminating between what is to be accepted as historical, and what must be regarded as embellished or fabricated.

With such a presentation of the case as this no thoughtful man can fail to have deep sympathy. It states precisely the spirit which is animating great numbers of earnest students of the Bible. The days when by criticism was meant an itching for novelties, the more destructive the better, are past, and we are already beginning to see how from the original elements of the Scriptures Christian scholarship is giving us a basis for historical faith which is at once rational and inspiring.